

Paper PM02

Why is it important to build team spirit and some ideas on how to do it?

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Abstract

Building a strong team spirit is essential for meeting deadlines because it fosters collaboration, efficiency, and motivation. When team members trust and support each other, they communicate more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and delays. A positive team environment encourages individuals to share ideas, solve problems together, and divide tasks efficiently, ensuring that work progresses smoothly. Moreover, strong team spirit boosts morale, keeping employees engaged and motivated to meet their goals. When people feel valued and connected to their team, they are more likely to take responsibility for their tasks and help colleagues who may be struggling. This collective effort ensures that projects stay on track. In high-pressure situations, a well-bonded team remains resilient and adaptable, finding creative solutions to challenges rather than getting discouraged. Ultimately, a team that works well together can overcome obstacles more efficiently, leading to timely project completion and overall success.

Introduction

In a global team, spirit isn't just a "nice-to-have"; it's the fundamental operating system for success. When team members are separated by time zones, languages, and cultural norms, a unified spirit is the bridge that connects them. This shared sense of belonging and purpose is what transforms a group of geographically dispersed individuals into a cohesive unit. It builds the essential trust needed to collaborate effectively, encouraging open communication and ensuring that diverse perspectives are valued as a source of innovation rather than a cause of friction. A strong global team spirit ensures everyone is pulling in the same direction, aligned on a common mission that transcends their individual location.

Conversely, a poor or non-existent team spirit in a global setting can be disastrous, amplifying the inherent challenges of distance. A lack of connection quickly breeds an "us vs. them" mentality between different offices or regions. Misunderstandings fester, as small communication gaps widen into chasms of mistrust. Team members may feel isolated, unsupported, and disengaged, leading to a sharp decline in motivation and productivity. This negativity results in siloed work, duplicated efforts, and internal conflicts, as the team spends more energy navigating its own dysfunction than achieving its goals. The good news is that global team spirit can be intentionally built, and it often starts with fostering personal connections. Simple, structured activities can be incredibly effective. For example, you can kick off meetings with a "quick bio" segment, where one team member shares a two-minute presentation about their life, hobbies, or local culture, allowing colleagues to see the person behind the email address. Even incorporating fun, non-work-related presentations—like a virtual "show and tell" or a lighthearted debate—can break down formal barriers, spark conversations, and build the shared experiences that are the foundation of a strong, connected, and spirited global team.

What happens when there is Poor Team Spirit?

When team spirit is absent, a group functions merely as a collection of individuals rather than a cohesive unit. This lack of unity quickly breeds **mistrust** and **poor communication**, leading to misunderstandings, duplicated efforts, and internal conflicts. Motivation plummets, as members feel disconnected from the shared goals and unsupported by colleagues. Instead of collaboration, a **siloed mentality** or **internal competition** takes over, focusing on individual survival rather than collective success. Consequently, productivity declines, the quality of work suffers, and the team's ability to innovate or overcome challenges is severely compromised, often culminating in failure to meet objectives and a negative, high-stress work environment. - It is important as Project/Study Lead to find time to create team spirit.

Changing the way people approach work.

Working hard is often mistakenly viewed as the opposite of enjoyment, as if effort must always feel like a burden. However, enjoyment at work is frequently *born* from that very effort. True satisfaction often comes from overcoming a difficult challenge, mastering a complex skill, or making tangible progress toward a **meaningful goal**. This process can lead to a state of "**flow**," a feeling of deep immersion and focus that is highly rewarding in itself. The pride and sense of **accomplishment** derived from conquering a tough problem or creating high-quality work provide a profound, lasting pleasure that simple, easy tasks rarely offer. Therefore, hard work and enjoyment aren't opposing forces; they are often two parts of the same rewarding experience.

An easy way to create Global Team Spirit.

1. Preparation

Assign Pairs: Before the main meeting begins, divide your group into pairs.

Prepare Instructions: Have the two discussion questions ready to share on-screen or in the chat.

2. Running the Activity (During the main meeting)

Announce the Activity: At the very start of the meeting, welcome everyone and introduce this short icebreaker.

Give Instructions: Explain the following steps clearly:

"I have already assigned everyone a partner."

"In a moment, one person from each pair will need to immediately start a separate, private call (on Teams/Meet/Zoom) and invite their partner to join them."

"You will leave this main meeting and join that private call for exactly 5 minutes."

Share the Prompts: Display or paste the following two questions for them to discuss in their pairs:

What have you enjoyed most about your work recently?

What do you like to do outside of work (e.g., hobbies, interests), or is there an interesting story you'd like to share?

Start the Timer: Tell everyone to "Go!" and start a 5-minute timer for yourself.

Rejoin and Share: When the 5 minutes are up have everyone rejoin the main meeting.

Go around the group and ask each person to introduce their partner and share one interesting thing they learned about them.

Why should you do warm ups?

The purpose of initiating meetings with a brief warm-up activity extends far beyond simple icebreaking. These activities serve several critical team-building and operational functions:

Fosters Cohesion and Psychological Safety: These sessions are instrumental in bringing team members together, creating a shared experience that builds rapport and strengthens interpersonal bonds.

Develops Communication Confidence: They provide a low-stakes, supportive environment for all members to practice presenting and public speaking. This is particularly valuable for individuals for whom English is not their first language, helping them build confidence in a professional setting.

Promotes Cross-Cultural Understanding: By encouraging colleagues to share personal experiences, we gain valuable insights into different cultures, backgrounds, and countries. This directly supports a more inclusive, empathetic, and globally-minded team dynamic.

Strengthens Relational Foundations: The trust and understanding built during these informal interactions are not just social benefits; they are operationally essential. A team with strong relational foundations can navigate difficult conversations more effectively. This includes discussing sensitive decisions, such as reassigning roles, asking a member to take on a less interesting (but necessary) task, or requesting extra hours during critical periods.

Boosts Morale and Engagement: While these activities require a small investment of time—perhaps ten minutes to prepare—the return is a significant lift in both individual and collective morale. This positive start to a meeting can energize the entire team and improve the quality of the subsequent discussion.

Lastly, I wanted to share why I build these warm-ups into our meetings. On the surface, they're a simple way to bring people together, but for me, the reasons go much deeper.

A big one is helping everyone build confidence in presenting. As someone whose first language isn't English, I know how challenging that can be. These short, informal activities give us a safe space to practice, to find our voice, and to get comfortable speaking in the group.

I also just love hearing from everyone. These sessions are a window into our team's diverse experiences. I genuinely enjoy learning about my colleagues' lives, hearing their stories, and getting a glimpse into different cultures and countries. It makes our team feel more connected and human.

This connection isn't just social; it's crucial for our work. When we have to make hard decisions—like moving people to different roles, asking someone to tackle a task that isn't the most interesting, or needing to put in extra hours—it's so much easier because we have that foundation of trust. We're not just a group of names on a screen; we're people who know and respect each other.

But if I'm being completely honest, the main reason I do them is because I personally enjoy them. Don't get me wrong, there are definitely times I've had to create slides when I really didn't want to. But the 10 minutes I take to do it almost always lifts my own mood, and I truly hope it does the same for the rest of the team.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the importance of building a true global team—rather than just a group of individuals who happen to be geographically dispersed—lies in creating a foundation of cohesion. Without it, a team defaults to mistrust, poor communication, and a siloed, transactional environment where challenges are magnified and motivation suffers.

This is precisely why regular, informal warm-up activities are such a powerful and practical tool. While they may seem like a simple 10-minute diversion, they are actually consistent, strategic investments in our team's relational infrastructure. They intentionally create a space for the personal connections that remote work can easily erase. By allowing us to share experiences, learn about different cultures, and build confidence in a low-stakes setting, these activities build a crucial "bank of goodwill."

This trust is the essential ingredient that transforms difficult conversations. When we have to discuss a change in roles, assign a less-interesting task, or ask for extra hours, we are no longer asking from a position of simple authority, but from a position of shared understanding and mutual respect. These small, humanizing moments are what enable a team to navigate high-pressure situations with empathy and collaboration, turning a collection of individuals into a resilient and truly unified team.